

Challenging the Past

THE PAINTINGS OF

Chang Dai-chien

Shen C. Y. Fu

with major contributions and translated by
Jan Stuart

selected poems and inscriptions translated by
Stephen D. Allee

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
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1 A Lion among Painters

CHANG DAI-CHIEN (1899–1983) was surely one of the most versatile, prolific, best-trained, and well-traveled artists in the history of Chinese painting (fig. 1). More than anyone else, Chang transformed traditional Chinese painting into a contemporary idiom. He was both the last great traditionalist of literati painting and an internationally acclaimed modernist, the most avant-garde of his generation.

Affecting the garb of an ancient scholar, Chang Dai-chien looked like an anachronism. His floor-length robe and tall cap were modeled after the poet Su Shi (1036–1101), and with flowing white beard and gnarled wooden staff, Chang looked like a figure in a Song dynasty painting. While fervently continuing tradition, he also fully participated in modern life. For example, after 1949, when he expatriated from China, he began traveling worldwide; stepping aboard a jet dressed in his ancient garb, he symbolized the coalescence of tradition and modernity. Creating the same striking synthesis of old and new in his painting brought Chang world fame. Each time he arrived at an airport, fans, reporters, and family welcomed him, snapping pictures and demonstrating enthusiasm for this genius who gave the best of past and present new expression by combining them in his work.

The root of Chang Dai-chien's phenomenal success was self-challenge. In everything he undertook, whether it was painting, cooking, or building a garden, he was determined to surpass famous ancient scholars and artists. Chang believed that imitating past masters was like practicing artistic alchemy in hopes of transmuting the iron of raw talent into gold. During his career, Chang often copied and even forged the ancient masters to enhance his skill, his reputation, or his

income. Chang was capable of making virtually identical copies of ancient works, yet he insisted that a true artist should transform the ancient models—sometimes only subtly—into a personal expression. His forgeries were rarely stroke-by-stroke imitations; usually they were creative reinterpretations of the past. Chang's career is a continuum beginning with the copies and forgeries he made of ancient models and ending with his brilliant innovation of splashed-ink-and-color painting. This innovation, akin to abstract expressionism, was the ultimate transformation: under some influence from the West, Chang Dai-chien advanced the Tang dynasty *pomo*, or “splashed-ink,” technique of painting by spattering ink and pigments into semiabstract compositions that have won international acclaim.

The scholar and painter Xie Zhiliu (b. 1910) once conservatively estimated that his friend Chang Dai-chien painted five hundred works a year; Chang's career total is a mind-boggling thirty thousand paintings.¹ Discounting unrecorded paintings and those lost, especially during the Cultural Revolution in China, Chang's corpus still numbers around five thousand works. But it is for diversity and quality more than prodigious output that Chinese painters have acclaimed Chang Dai-chien as “a lion among painters.” He worked in virtually every major style, such as fine-line (*gongbi*) and loose-brush (*xieyi*) techniques, as well as painting from life (*xiesheng*) and copying other works (*lin*). He also painted all subjects: secular and religious figures, landscapes, birds-and-flowers, and animals. In calligraphy, he practiced the five major types of script and occasionally he carved seals. Ultimately Chang synthesized his cumulative experience to create a powerful style of his own.

Chang Dai-chien was one of the few twentieth-century artists to master the Three Perfections—painting, calligraphy, and poetry—and weave them together. Even his poetry, which Chang practiced the least, earned the praise of literary critics.

Fig. 1. Chang Dai-chien, 1975. Photograph by Roy Shigley, San Francisco.

The concept of the Three Perfections has traditionally been the purview of literati-artists, who painted as an avocation, but Chang Dai-chien was unabashedly a professional painter. He benefited from the examples of Qi Baishi (1864–1957) and Wu Changshuo (1844–1927), who supported themselves by painting and yet cultivated a scholarly aura. Unlike those two artists, who altered the literati tradition by mixing classical and popular—even folk—elements in their work, Chang was determined to revive the elite tradition of literati painting as practiced by scholars in the Song through the mid-Qing dynasties and make it appealing to the modern audience.

Chang Dai-chien's oeuvre is a virtual survey of the history of Chinese painting. In modern art he stands out for his innovations, while in ancient painting he is represented both as a major collector and as a talented forger. Moreover, his own paintings reflect styles from every era. Thus a single volume can only present a general evolution of his painting style and a few of the highlights of this astonishing man's life.

Note

1. Although thirty thousand works might sound like hyperbole, the artist Wang Yani (b. 1975) was said by her father to have painted ten thousand works by age fourteen.

3 Painting Theory

DESPITE HIS literary accomplishments, Chang Dai-chien never wrote a systematic treatise about painting for fear that he would be unable to express his deepest convictions. The inscriptions he wrote on his paintings, however, often touch on aesthetic theory and include advice about painting methods and materials. The prefaces he occasionally wrote for exhibition catalogues were slightly more discursive, the most revealing being the preface that accompanied his retrospective in 1972 at the Avery Brundage Collection (now the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco). The majority of his essays address problems of connoisseurship, not aesthetic theory. The longest of these essays, "Gugong minghua duhou ji," was written in 1959 and originally appeared in a daily newspaper. The essay is preserved in Yue Shuren's *Chang Dai-chien shiwen ji*.

Some of Chang Dai-chien's friends diligently preserved his oral pronouncements on painting theory and methodology. The most notable are Gao Lingmei, an editor who published two separate volumes in Hong Kong recording Chang's comments,¹ and Zeng Keduan, a well-known poet and calligrapher who helped record Chang's maxims for Gao's earlier book. Selected reproductions of Chang's paintings accompany the texts. The earlier volume is similar to a traditional painting manual (*huapu*); didactic text and demonstration sketches are paired for each topic, including landscape, figure, bird-and-flower, and animal painting. Reproductions of Chang's paintings are interspersed throughout. Gao Lingmei's 1967 publication, *Chang Dai-chien hua ji*, repeats some of the text from the earlier volume but is not arranged as a manual. It includes different paintings as illustrations and a valuable sixteen-point discourse that condenses Chang Dai-chien's thoughts on painting. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations in this chapter are from that discourse.²

Chang Dai-chien espoused that "the main principle of

painting is to express beauty,"³ and every facet of his career reflects this attitude. The artist forcefully decreed, "Paint only that which is truly beautiful and cast away the ugly."⁴

For Chang, a work of art had to have three virtues: greatness (*da*), indirectness (*chu*), and radiance (*liang*). The first two terms were borrowed from literary criticism, but Chang recast them to fit painting theory. *Da* means "large" and "great," and by extension Chang used it to mean "monumental spirit." He applied the term equally to works of any size, saying that every painting should be majestic and vigorous. Chen Congzhou (b. 1918), who is best known as a historian of gardens, was one of Chang's first students in Shanghai. He once described the vitality of his teacher's painting using *da* three times: "Chang Dai-chien's painting has monumentality, powerful brushwork, and great dynamism."⁵

To possess the quality of *chu* a painting must go beyond attractive visual details to include cultural and art historical references. A great painting should offer a new sensation to the viewer each time it is studied. Chang believed that the viewer's reaction was a measure of the artist's success in conveying knowledge, personal cultivation, and life experiences. But the viewer also tests his or her own erudition and capacity for responding to the multiple layers of meaning an artist may encode into a painting. Chang Dai-chien's paintings often have layers of art historical and cultural allusions. Chang's *Light Snow at Tongguan* (entry 29), for example, re-creates a painting by Dong Qichang (1555–1636), who was in turn following Yang Sheng (act. 713–741) and his method of creating forms with color washes instead of outlines, a technique that ultimately derived from the work of Zhang Sengyou (act. 500–550).

The third virtue that Chang Dai-chien demanded of a painting, *liang*, was a term borrowed from the performing arts. The word means "radiant," "lustrous," and "clear," and

applied to opera, it means "stage presence." The moment when a performer first steps on stage for the audience to admire his deportment is called *liangxiang*. If the impression is favorable, it is spoken of as *piaoliang*, which in everyday conversation means "pretty" but in this context suggests a radiant presence. Whenever Chang Dai-chien displayed one of his paintings, he would ask, "Is it radiant?"

Although the basic meaning of *liang* concerns the visual perception of light, Chang seems to have been the first to apply it to painting. He did not restrict "radiant" to mean only the effects of light or color in a painting; he used it to refer to vibrancy and harmony of brushwork and composition as well.

To Chang a radiant painting exuded balance and restraint; he believed a work of art should be "gentle but not effete, unimpeded but not wild, and profound yet clear." He also instructed artists to "avoid using the brush fussily." The ink itself "should exude elegance and luster."

Chang Dai-chien discussed composition in terms of yin and yang dualities and the harmonious complement they create. He warned, "Symmetry and overall evenness should be proscribed. Instead, observe the rule that one should juxtapose the principle and the subordinate elements, the dense and the sparse, the pale and the dark, the heavy and the light, the subdued and the animated, the nearby and the far, and the high and the low."

Great painting is not solely a product of innate ability; nor is it entirely dependent on technical expertise. In fact, Chang was fond of saying that an artist's success is seven parts endeavor and three parts natural talent. Following the creed of traditional literati-painters, Chang also stated that "art is the natural expression of one's feelings and a revelation of self. An artist should on a daily basis cultivate his good nature and temperament; if one merely perfects technique he can still sink to the lower rank."

In the discourse on painting that Gao Lingmei published in 1967, Chang Dai-chien also stressed the value of reading and studying literature systematically, selecting the most appropriate works. He paired the value of travel with that of reading, citing both as inspiration to a painter. In addition, Chang believed that an artist must know his subject firsthand, a rule instilled in him by his sister Zhengheng, who insisted that he paint flowers from life. When Chang Dai-chien painted *Horse and Groom* (entry 26) he was bold enough to think, based on his knowledge of horses, that his horses were better than those of the master painter Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322). Chang's theory of painting harks back to early Daoist philosophy, which proclaims that the "level of knowledge [is] similar to that of the aesthetic experience in which the self merges

empathically into the world of external objects."⁶ Through such union the artist can know the "spiritual essence" of his subject, which according to Chang Dai-chien was "of first importance to the artist."

In his quest for monumentality, layered meanings, and radiance, Chang Dai-chien began searching China's artistic past for examples of beauty forgotten. Chang held the principle of *fugu*, or returning to the past, as the foundation of his personal creativity. This principle is intimately linked with the tradition of copying ancient art, which Chang Dai-chien credited as the basis of his successful career. He explained:

To study painting, first select one old master and carefully choose from his works to build a foundation [for yourself], then gradually study other famous masters to expand your horizons . . . ultimately transform the old masters' styles into something personal, thus creating an independent, individual style.

Whenever Chang Dai-chien felt his art was growing stale, he delved further back in China's art history in search of neglected styles. In the early 1940s, after he had learned the techniques and subject matter of the Yuan through Qing dynasties, he found inspiration in the Tang dynasty murals in the caves at Dunhuang. In these Buddhist murals the disciplined, "iron-wire" outlines filled with rich colors were a refreshing change from the fluctuating calligraphic brush strokes and soft washes of color he had previously mastered.

When Chang felt the need for a new challenge, after he had perfected the meticulous, decorative manner of the Dunhuang caves, he looked again to the past. His splashed-ink-and-color paintings were derived from the nearly forgotten splashed-ink, or *pomo*, technique that some Tang dynasty eccentrics had promulgated. By adding color, Chang developed a semi-abstract style that he believed was based in China's past. He observed, "During every period in Chinese painting, what is newest is that which has come down from the past."⁷

The Artistic Tradition of Imitation and Forgery

In China, artists learn painting and calligraphy by copying ancient masterworks. Before photography, meticulous free-hand imitations were the best assurance that perishable works of art would be preserved and circulated. The value of copying as a pedagogical tool brought it to a level of honor in China, although there were always dissenting voices. In the long history of Chinese art and literature, the debate over the intrinsic value of copying has been one of the most contested

issues, and until the beginning of the twentieth century, the proponents of copying were a powerful majority. This majority, which included Chang Dai-chien, insisted that studying the ancients and copying their works provided the insights and techniques essential for personal expression.

The value of copying as a method of learning is perhaps most easily understood in the case of calligraphy. When writing a Chinese character, a student learns by rote the combination of dots and lines and the proper order in which to brush them. By reproducing the work of masters—first copying individual elements and then whole components—a student learns to recognize patterns and the difference between good and bad calligraphy. Gradually the student is able to work independently, inflecting a personal cadence into the brushwork.

Copying is not, however, merely a stage in learning; it is valued in itself. This value is difficult for Westerners to appreciate. Western attitudes generally maintain that copying is evidence of a lack of imagination and forgery is fraud. It is perhaps only in the performing arts that the combination of repetition and originality are appreciated. An actor may gain distinction for reciting a Shakespeare soliloquy; in playing or copying a work that has been performed thousands of times, a musician is judged on personal interpretation. Success on the stage depends on technique and imagination, and these are equally important in the visual arts. The Chinese recognize that copying allows an artist—whether painter, calligrapher, actor, or musician—to benefit from cumulative experience. They embrace the idea that the past can fructify the present. In China it is a major challenge for an artist to renew the past, just as in the West it is a triumph for a musician to make Beethoven live again with each performance.

Chang Dai-chien elaborated on his position on the value of painting copies.

If you want to learn painting, you must first become skilled at making detailed copies of ancient masterpieces; the time you spend making stroke-by-stroke copies will result in your familiarity with how to make all kinds of outline and texture strokes and allow you to understand all the rules and methods of painting.⁸

And in the comments that Gao Lingmei published, Chang defended the practice.

Those who criticize copyists of ancient paintings by claiming that they are dependent on someone else are quite shallow and base. Copying is very similar to studying and memorizing texts or studying examples of calligraphy. Have you ever seen anyone who can compose a good essay who has not read and memorized books, or met someone who has a good hand but has not practiced copying a range of calligraphers?

Chang once stated: "You should not study just one painter or limit yourself by choosing only models whose styles fit your own personal bent. Think analytically and take the essence from famous works, then you must transform them."⁹ Transformation is the difference between merely copying and challenging the past. But to achieve the ultimate level of transformation, Chang cautioned that an artist had to study his model from the inside out and seek the original creative spark. In order to do this Chang believed it was necessary to not only replicate but also manipulate the constituent elements in a model. Chang instructed his student Hu Yan: "Choose a painting and hang it up and then follow these three steps: first, make a reduced-size copy of the model, then make an enlargement of the original. Last, make a copy the same scale as the original, trying to reproduce it exactly."¹⁰

This was the three-stage process Chang had used to teach himself how to copy a painting. Altering the scale of the original in the first two steps was Chang's own approach to the practice of copying, an exercise similar to music students playing the same work in different tempos or Western art students drawing objects using a range of proportions and perspectives.

Throughout his career, Chang Dai-chien continued to copy works he admired, though there are proportionally more copies from his early years. He even applied the principle of copying to his own work, typically creating more than one version of a painting (with the exception of his splashed-ink-and-color compositions). Many of Chang's contemporaries, perhaps under the influence of the West, worried that copying limited creativity. Yet while they eschewed this practice, they often fell into mindless repetition of the prevailing fashion. Chang Dai-chien's solution of *fugu*, or returning to the past, enhanced his creativity, but only because he accepted copying as a viable artistic tradition.

The difference between a copy and what is thought of in the West as its "criminal sibling," forgery, is not always clear.¹¹ The major distinction is in the copyist's intent—any copy might be turned into a forgery under certain circumstances. In Chinese art there are three major categories of copies, and Chang Dai-chien practiced all of them. The first category is *lin* (close copy), in which an artist confronts an original and imitates it as closely as possible without the aid of tracing or mechanical means. Chang's *Clear Morning over Lakes and Mountains* (entry 43), a copy of a work by Liu Daoshi (act. 10th cent.), is a good example of *lin*. The second type of copy is *fang* (free-hand imitation), a method that involves a slightly greater degree of personal interpretation than the first. In spite of the fact that Chang called *Blissful Old Age* (entry 18) a close copy (*lin*) of a work by Zhu Da (1626–1705), it is an

example of a free-hand imitation. A third category of copy is *zao* (creative reinterpretation), in which a copyist assumes the style of an ancient master to paint a “new” work instead of reproducing something in the master’s extant corpus. Each of Chang’s *Four Mounted Fans* (entry 8) is an example of *zao*. These terms are sometimes randomly interchanged or, as in the case of *fanglin*, combined.

An artist may sign any type of imitation with his own name and/or an acknowledgment of his source. But often a copy will have no signature, or alternatively the artist may copy the signature of the ancient master alone. If the purpose of signing the ancient master’s name is deceitful, then the copy is a forgery, or *wei* (see entries 1, 6, 11, 12, 16, 42, and 45). If the copyist falsely antiques the paper or silk and adds spurious seals and bogus inscriptions in order to sell the work at an exaggerated price, such a work is considered a forgery both in the East and West. The notion of “buyer beware” is stronger in China than in the West; it is not so much the seller’s responsibility to guarantee authenticity as it is the buyer’s to recognize it. Chang Dai-chien produced forgeries for a variety of reasons: to express his admiration for an ancient master, to test his personal skill, to assess someone else’s connoisseurship, or to make a profit.

Anecdotes of Chinese artists from the past reveal that the motives for copying and forgery in China are historically complex and that traditionally forgery has even been admired in certain circumstances. One of the earliest stories tells about Wang Xianzhi (344–386) forging the calligraphy of his father Wang Xizhi (ca. 303–ca. 365), who has been immortalized as the calligraphy sage.

Before Wang Xizhi left for the capital he wrote an inscription on the wall that Zijing [Wang Xianzhi] secretly erased and replaced with his own version, all the while congratulating himself that his writing was close to his father’s. When Xizhi returned home and saw the inscription he sighed and said, “When I left I truly must have been very drunk.” Zijing felt privately ashamed.¹²

Many incidents concerning forgeries are associated with the master calligrapher, painter, theoretician, and art collector Mi Fu (1051–1107), who recorded such events in his *Shu shi* (History of Calligraphy).

Every time I go to the capital, Wang Shen (ca. 1046–after 1100) invites me to his residence to review a stack of calligraphy with him and he asks me to copy [*lin*] some of the pieces. When I was looking through the paintings and calligraphies in his storage cabinet, I spotted my own copy of Wang Zijing’s [Wang Xianzhi] *Flock of Geese*, the hemp-fiber paper of which [Wang Shen] had had dyed and creased to look antique. My copy had been mounted with brocade and jade knobs on the roller;

colophons, which had been cut from [genuinely ancient] calligraphies had been attached to my copy. I also saw that my copy of Yu Shinan’s [558–638] writing had been dyed, mounted, and given to men of stature, who were asked to write colophons for it. When I saw this I laughed, but Wang Shen grabbed it from my hand.¹³

While Mi Fu’s “honest” copies were being turned into forgeries behind his back, he was producing other imitations, whose purpose was to test both his own skill as a calligrapher and his audience’s level of connoisseurship.

Mi Yuanzhang [Mi Fu] was especially skilled at copying [*lin*], even to the point that his copies were confused with the originals. He frequently borrowed ancient works from other people in order to copy them. He would return the original and his copy together to the owners and instruct them to pick out the original, but usually the collector could not distinguish between them.¹⁴

Another story about Mi Fu illustrates the tolerance and admiration for imitation—including forgery.

The son of Chen Boxiu [late 11th cent.] . . . loved to practice calligraphy. Once he took a small screen and made a free-hand imitation [*fang*] on it of Mi Yuanzhang’s [Mi Fu] calligraphy. . . . One day Yuanzhang came by, and when he saw it he was startled. . . . Yuanzhang was so delighted [that he instructed Chen in the methods of calligraphy].¹⁵

These examples refer to calligraphy, but the same attitudes are true for painting. A seventeenth-century record by Zhou Lianggong (1612–1672), the major patron of the period, reveals that the art of making forgeries could promote a painter’s recognition.

Wang Shigu’s [Wang Hui; 1632–1717] . . . imitations [*fanglin*] of Song and Yuan dynasty [masters] hardly differ [from the originals]. The people in Wu used to ask him to paint and then mounted his paintings in the fashion of old master’s works, thus making forgeries [*wei*] to fool the connoisseurs. Even those who were experienced connoisseurs did not realize the work was by a contemporary. . . . Shigu is a great genius and his experience full; therefore, when he puts his brush to paper he can stay abreast of the ancients. He is the greatest to have appeared in a century.¹⁶

Zhou Lianggong so admired Wang Hui’s mimetic skill that it was the first accomplishment he cited in recognizing the painter. Likewise, Chang Dai-chien received early recognition as a forger, especially of Shitao’s work, and Chang used this notoriety to promote himself. In the early 1920s, when the famous connoisseur and painter Huang Binhong mistook Chang’s *Through Ancient Eyes, Signed as Shitao* (entry 1) for

an original, Chang realized what could be gained by making forgeries.

Chang Dai-chien could visualize paintings that he had only briefly seen years before, an ability that enabled him to make copies of many works as a training method to learn ancient styles. He also remembered collectors' seals and colophons on the ancient works he had seen, thus making it easy to turn a copy into a forgery whenever he so desired.

In the early 1930s Chang Hsueh-Liang (b. 1898), a powerful military official who collected ancient paintings, realized that he had several forgeries by Chang Dai-chien, and so he invited the artist to a banquet. He introduced Chang by saying, "This man is a specialist in imitating the works of Shitao. My painting collection contains many false works by Chang."¹⁷ Contrary to the Western expectation, Chang Hsueh-Liang's introduction was a compliment. A long friendship grew out of this meeting, and Chang Dai-chien painted several works for his friend, including *The Sound of Autumn* (entry 15) and *Illustrated Menu* (entry 83).

Late in life Chang Dai-chien still used his ability as a copyist-forgery to gain recognition and satisfaction. In 1968 the University of Michigan Museum of Art, which had organized an exhibition of Shitao's work, invited Chang to attend a symposium. While there, Chang delighted in pointing out that several paintings in the exhibition were his own copies. At a lecture on Zhu Da given by Aschwin Lippe of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the 1960s, Chang, although he could not understand English, rose several times during the slide presentation to excitedly claim an image as his work. Not only was Chang proud of his forgeries of Zhu Da, but also it was a joy for him to point out how he had fooled the audience of scholars and connoisseurs. Chang Dai-chien used forgery as a way to compete with the ancients, and as Zhou Lianggong said of Wang Hui, to "stay abreast" of them. The only objective way to measure such accomplishment was the reaction of esteemed connoisseurs.

Chang Dai-chien's purpose in making forgeries changed according to the situation: recognition, self-challenge, and testing others were the initial motivations to turn the "honest" copies, which he made to train himself, into forgeries. But a desire for profit followed. Ever since the open art market began to flourish in the late Ming dynasty, forgeries have proliferated. The practice was so pervasive in the seventeenth century that people even wrote poems and plays about art forgery, and Chang was tempted to enter this ethos.¹⁸ After 1925, it occurred to him that he could make money by forging art. That year he stopped accepting financial support from his older brothers, whose shipping business had to pay steep reparations for a boat accident. Chang was a spendthrift and his



Fig. 14. Chen Hongshou, *Mountain of the Five Cataracts*. Hanging scroll; ink-on silk; The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, 66.366.

passion for collecting ancient art was greater than he could support by sales of his paintings. Chang began to sell his forgeries, using the money to purchase ancient paintings, which he would copy and learn from; thus, he felt he was following the ancient adage "to take a painting and exchange it for another."

Chang Dai-chien's reputation as a forger has reached almost legendary proportions; consequently, scholars are both tempted to invoke his name and wary of suggesting that problematic paintings may be his forgeries. Any unusual ancient Chinese painting is in danger of being dismissed as "another of Chang Dai-chien's forgeries."

Chang was, in fact, so good at imitating the styles of ancient painting and calligraphy, and his range was so broad, that it is difficult to securely identify his forgeries. Yet doing



Fig. 15. Chang Dai-chien, *Sheer Peaks and Deep Valley*, Signed as Wang Shen. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk; collection unknown. Special thanks to Carl Nagin for bringing this photograph to the author's attention.

so refines scholarly understanding of genuine paintings and of Chang's development as a modern painter. Moreover, his forgeries are further evidence of Chang Dai-chien's accomplishments as an artist.

The forgeries must be studied in combination with "honest" copies, such as *Blissful Old Age* (entry 18) and *Clear Morning over Lakes and Mountains* (entry 43), which help establish idiosyncrasies in brushwork and coloring that Chang could

not suppress even when trying to recall exactly the manner of an ancient master. The forgeries fall into line with Chang's general development as a painter, for he used the same models for his creative interpretations and his contemporaneous forgeries. The ancient masterpieces he acquired for his personal Dafeng Tang collection suggest both his current interests and the kinds of forgeries to look for at any given time. Chang also tended to produce more forgeries in times of personal financial hardship, so that the acquisitions of Chinese paintings by museums and collectors during those years deserve close scrutiny.

Chang's genius probably guarantees that some of his forgeries will remain undetected for a long time to come. By creating "ancient" paintings that matched the verbal descriptions recorded in catalogues of lost paintings, Chang was able to paint forgeries that collectors had been yearning to "discover." In some works, he would transform images in totally unexpected ways; he might recast a Ming dynasty composition as if it were a Song dynasty painting. For example, Chen Hongshou's (1598–1652) *Mountain of the Five Cataracts* (fig. 14) reappears as a painting ascribed to the eleventh-century painter Wang Shen in Chang's *Sheer Peaks and Deep Valley*, Signed as Wang Shen (fig. 15).

In the course of his career Chang Dai-chien imitated ever earlier artists, but during the 1920s and 1930s the models for his forgeries were mostly from the Ming and Qing dynasties and only occasionally from the Yuan and Song dynasties. Chang forged the works and style of Shitao most of all. Some of the other artists whose works he copied and forged during this period include: Jin Nong, Hua Yan, Li Shan, Gao Fenghan, Zhu Da, Mei Qing, Kuncan, Hongren, Zhang Feng, Dai Benxiao, Gong Xian, and Cheng Sui of the Qing dynasty; Huang Daozhou, Ni Yuanlu, Chen Hongshou, Dong Qichang, Chen Shun, Xu Wei, Tang Yin, Qiu Ying, Lin Liang, and Wu Wei of the Ming dynasty; Sheng Mou, Wang Meng, and Zhao Mengfu of the Yuan dynasty; and Lou Guan, Liang Kai, Ma Lin, Yi Yuanji, and Mi Fu of the Song dynasty. Chang's favorite models when forging calligraphy were Jin Nong, Gao Fenghan (especially his left-handed works), and Xu Wei, along with some other less accomplished Ming and Qing dynasty artists, such as Chen Zhenhui, Mao Xiang, Fang Yizhi, and Hou Fangyu.

Chang Dai-chien's sojourn at Dunhuang from 1941 to 1943 was a watershed. When he returned from studying the Tang dynasty paintings there, he concentrated on early masterworks. Coincidentally, the dispersal of paintings after World War II created opportunities to see and purchase many ancient scrolls, thus pushing Chang in a new direction for both his independent work and his forgeries. Although he is

much better known for his forgeries of the later periods, he made a considerable number of fine "Tang" and "Song" dynasty paintings (see App. 2).

Chang Dai-chien's earliest forgeries were purchased by Chinese and Japanese private collectors in the 1920s and 1930s. Chang needed money when he left China in 1949; because his Chinese patrons were also facing hard times, the market for his original work shrank. The costs of relocating his large household were so pressing that in 1952 he sold some of his favorite paintings from the Dafeng Tang to Asian collectors and even (through middlemen in Hong Kong) to the Chinese Cultural Relics Bureau. Even these sales did not fulfill his financial needs, and so Chang began to sell other paintings from the Dafeng Tang to Western museums. Collecting Chinese art was a new field in the United States; consequently, the prices were disappointing. Moreover, museums were uneasy about buying some of the paintings in Chang's collection simply because the works were anonymous. Chang reckoned that a signed work by a known master brought the best price, and he found that his forgeries fared well. During the 1950s, Chang produced imitations of works by famous artists of the Tang, Five Dynasties, and Northern Song periods. He passed the works through Chinese and Japanese dealers, often in Hong Kong or New York.

Chang Dai-chien had methodically developed the skills and acquired the materials he needed to make forgeries of ancient art. He collected old paper, silk, and ink, so a technical analysis of his materials would suggest an ancient date. From his textile training in Japan, he taught himself to prematurely age and darken silk and paper. Chinese paintings are typically mounted into scrolls or sometimes framed Western style, but even so they must be backed with paper and have silk surrounds added, as is done in making a scroll. Chang had the help of skilled craftsmen for this task. While still living in China, Chang had often visited Zhou Longcang in Suzhou, whose skill at mounting new paintings to look old, by using old silks and adding marks of wear, was exceptional. In Brazil, Chang Dai-chien asked a professional mounter to join his household.

At the beginning of his career Chang carved his own name seals and copies of ancient seals, but as he produced more forgeries, he hired seal engravers to assist him. The quality of Chang's already impressive fake seals improved when he began photographing genuine seal impressions and making photoengraved seals that perfectly reproduced the originals. Chang ultimately had at least 970 fake seals. The majority were Ming and Qing dynasty collectors' seals, but there were also early seals and some imperial seals in his collection. For the famous Ming collector Xiang Yuanbian (1525-1590),

Chang had about one hundred fake seals, with at least forty-seven different legends (see entry 45). He also manufactured name seals of about thirty different artists. Except for the infamous forgery workshop of Tan Jing, which was active during the 1930s in China, few seal collections could equal what Chang Dai-chien had fabricated.

Materials and Tools

For both his forgeries and his original work, Chang Dai-chien believed that the tools and materials he used to create a painting played an important role in the success of the work. He studied paper, ink, brushes, pigments, seals, seal paste, and scroll mountings in exacting detail. When he wrote an inscription on a painting, he sometimes included a postscript describing the type of paper, the age and origin of the ink, or the provenance of the pigments he had used.

Chang ordered his painting materials in bulk from a few trusted craftsmen, frequently commissioning special orders for a particular type of paper or brush. Indeed, Chang spent considerably more money and effort than most artists on supplies; few other artists have a comparable record for consistently using the highest quality materials.

Chang discussed paper and ink in some of his comments on painting techniques. In 1938 Chang went to the Qingcheng Mountains, near Chengdu in Sichuan Province, to escape from some of the major battles of the Sino-Japanese war. Chang preferred to paint on *xuan*, an absorbent vegetable-fiber paper, the best of which was made in Anhui Province. *Xuan* was unavailable in the Qingcheng Mountains during the war, and so Chang invited a chemist friend to Jiajiang, Sichuan's papermaking center, in hopes of improving the local paper. Their experiments were successful, and Chang was able to use Jiajiang paper for his painting and calligraphy without sacrificing quality. The innovations Chang and his friend engineered resulted in a permanent improvement in the quality of Jiajiang paper.

After Chang expatriated, he once again had to find new sources of paper. He tested paper made in Thailand, and when he was living in Darjeeling, he used paper from Nepal. But Japanese papermakers provided the closest substitute for Chinese paper, which is absorbent and strong enough to resist tearing, even from the tension of sweeping brush strokes. Chang specially ordered from Japan handmade paper bearing the watermark "Dafeng Tang." In the last years of his life, in Taiwan, he occasionally used paper made with unusual fibers, such as pineapple leaves.

Ink was of special concern to Chang Dai-chien. On his way

home from a trip to the Yellow Mountains in Anhui Province, he stopped at Shexian, the most famous producer of inksticks in China. He placed an order for custom-made inksticks with the inscription "Returning Home from the Yellow Mountains." Chang also collected antique inksticks, but while most collectors of Ming dynasty and Qianlong period (1736–1795) specimens treasure and display their inksticks as they would a porcelain or painting, Chang actually ground the ink and used it to paint. Admirers and connoisseurs often presented him with antique inksticks, although after receiving one such gift, Chang asked his secretary to write a thank-you note and dictated the line, "Old Man [Dai-]chien has himself collected enough [ink] to last a lifetime."¹⁹

Chang Dai-chien cherished particular types of brushes, believing the correct brush would make possible a virtuoso performance on paper. After he left China, Chang used Yang Zhenhua brushes, which he ordered in large batches from Hong Kong; these animal-hair brushes hold their point particularly well. Precise manufacture and careful selection of quality hair affect the ability of a brush to soak up ink and, when pressed to paper, release the inky fluid in smooth lines. For Chang, who was so concerned with line quality, a good brush was crucial to his art. He also ordered brushes from Japan. On a visit to England, Chang was introduced to a special paintbrush made from the hair of an ox's ear. The material delighted Chang, but he was not satisfied with the construction of the Western brush so he had the ox hairs shipped to Japan for his trusted brush makers to use in traditional Eastern brushes. He named the new product "Leader of the Art World."

Chang Dai-chien's manufacture and collection of spurious seals has already been discussed; however, he also generated a large assortment of personal name seals. As his time to carve seals was limited, he commissioned most of them from the professional carvers of the day. He was fastidious about the overall appearance of each seal as well as the engraving of the calligraphy legend. Chang became a connoisseur of seal paste and studied the placement of seals on paintings to be sure he could impress his seal so as to augment the painted image.

Chang Dai-chien was so particular about the mounting of his work that during several periods of his career he had a scroll mounter in his household. After 1950 Chang often took his paintings to Japan to have them mounted, since Japanese methods are similar to those used in China. But Chang always personally discussed his requirements before entrusting a painting to the Japanese mounters. He specified the weave, pattern, and color of the silk that would surround the painting, as well as the scroll knobs and the size and proportions of the painting borders. Such intimate involvement in the

mounting process ensured that the Japanese craftsmen achieved almost the same effect as Chinese mounters. From beginning to end, Chang Dai-chien's paintings reflected his personal standards and tastes.

Collecting Ancient Masterpieces

Chang Dai-chien's belief that an artist should copy the best master paintings to build his skills required familiarity with a corpus of major works. For Chang, this requirement became an addiction. His voracious appetite for collecting led him to establish relationships with all the major dealers in China, Japan, and Hong Kong, and to embark on numerous quests for works owned by private collectors. He once crossed the country, north to south, in pursuit of *Rock and Fungus of Immortality* (collection unknown) by Shitao that he had heard was available. Each time he got close, he learned it had been resold. Chang acquired the greatest number of works while he lived in China, but he continued collecting until the late 1960s, not long before he moved to the United States. He sold his own paintings and forgeries to finance his passion for collecting. Only after he moved to Taiwan, a few years before his death, did Chang stop acquiring new works.

From 1955 to 1956 Chang published reproductions of the ancient paintings in his collection in four volumes called *Dafeng Tang mingji* (Masterpieces of the Dafeng Tang). Printed in Japan, the set initiated a vogue for publications of private collections. In the preface Chang explained his passion for collecting.

If I come across a treasure, I realize I absolutely must have it for my own collection; in fact, I feel like my life depends on making the acquisition and day and night I dream of it. I am willing to go into debt if need be; it is hard to change this old habit and yearning. My addiction for collecting [paintings] is like Mi Fu's [of the Song dynasty].²⁰

Even as a young artist in 1920, Chang was already a formidable collector, acquiring a rare masterwork by Ni Zan (1301–1374) called *Twin Trees by the South Bank* (fig. 16).²¹ The ethereal, dry brushwork and unrestrained mood of this work are especially prized. *Twin Trees* is among the few works attributed to Ni Zan that is generally accepted to be genuine, and Chang's astuteness in acquiring it is powerful testimony to his skill as a connoisseur. In 1951 Chang wrote a colophon on the *shitang* (sheet of paper above the painting) explaining the circumstances of the acquisition.

This is a genuine work from the brush of the lofty scholar Ni; I bought it in 1920 when I went to Sichuan to see my family. I

purchased it from Lu Xuetang in Yuzhou [Chongqing]. At the time I was just beginning to collect paintings and calligraphies, and this cost me three thousand cash. I took it with me to Shanghai for my late teacher Zeng Xi to appreciate. He admiringly said, "My student is just at the threshold of adulthood and his connoisseurship is already this good, so my studio is augmented by his presence."

War and political instability exacted a heavy toll, however, and several times Chang had to rebuild his collection. He lost the bulk of his first collection in the 1930s when the Japanese occupied Suzhou, where he had lived with Chang Shanzi and was storing the paintings in Wangshi Yuan. Dai-chien had left the collection in his brother's care as he traveled, but Shanzi was forced to evacuate Wangshi Yuan so quickly that he could not take the paintings with him. Only the works that Chang had with him in Peking were preserved. He was able to save them from the Japanese because a German friend who had a car helped him remove the paintings and ship them to Shanghai. From there Chang took them to Sichuan.

The end of World War II provided Chang Dai-chien with unparalleled opportunities for acquiring art. When the Qing dynasty collapsed in 1911, a few ancient paintings had illicitly entered the market from the palace collection, but the real boon occurred when Puyi sold some of his most remarkable holdings following the dismantling of the Manchukuo government at the conclusion of the war. Moreover, private collectors seeking to recoup war losses were unusually amenable to selling major pieces that had been in family collections for decades and even centuries. This availability of ancient paintings was timed just right for Chang Dai-chien, who could once again travel freely in Shanghai and Peking. By 1945, Chang was a well-established painter and connoisseur with the knowledge, contacts, and financial resources to acquire major works of art.

When Chang first returned to Peking in 1946, he intended to buy a house with his savings, but he abandoned the idea when he saw the selection of ancient art that he could buy. Through a broker he purchased two masterpieces that came from Puyi's palace in Changchun, Manchuria (now Jilin Province). The first, *The Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (fig. 17), is attributed to Dong Yuan (act. 937–976) and depicts the fertile hills of Jiangnan—literally China's "south of the [Yangzi] river" region. Dong Yuan's long, "hemp-fiber" texture strokes would become one of Chang's most expressive landscape idioms. The second masterpiece was *The Night Revels of Han Xizai* (fig. 18) attributed to Gu Hongzhong (act. 943–960). *Night Revels* is a most exquisite and delicately colored figure painting, a perfect model for Chang in developing his technique for fine-line drawing and precise coloring.



Fig. 16. Ni Zan, *Twin Trees by the South Bank*, 1353; colophon above painting by Chang Dai-chien, 1951. Hanging scroll; ink on paper; The Art Museum, Princeton University, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Wen C. Fong in honor of Mrs. Edward L. Elliott, Y1975-35.

On occasion, especially when he needed cash to build his garden in Brazil, Chang Dai-chien sold paintings from his collection, but he seldom bought art as an investment. He collected paintings as a way of inviting the artists of the past into his studio to teach him. His collection was a yardstick

Fig. 17. Attributed to Dong Yuan, detail, *The Xiao and Xiang Rivers*. Handscroll; ink and color on silk; Palace Museum, Peking. From *Dafeng Tang mingji*, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Benrido Co., 1955-56), pl. 4.



against which Chang measured himself. Whenever he traveled on a trip of any length, he took some ancient masterpieces with him, not to ensure their safety but simply because he did not want to be without the inspiration of the old masters.

In Chang's preface to the first volume of *Dafeng Tang mingji*, he explained the second time his beloved collection was dismantled.

The paintings that I collected in Sichuan were scattered by the turn of events in 1949. . . . I packed what I could in my luggage and took them with me, always adding to the collection on my way. The pieces date from the Tang to Qing dynasties, and they have been carefully selected. A total of thirty-seven artists are represented in thirty-eight works . . . but this is less than one percent of my old collection.²²

To have a collection of nearly four thousand paintings sounds like hyperbole, but Chang Dai-chien's life is marked by excesses and extremes.

Chang Dai-chien is incontestably a giant among twentieth-century collectors, and museums in China and the West have many fine works from his collection. His collection was never published in its entirety. In 1944, the year after Chang Dai-chien returned from Dunhuang, he prepared an unillustrated catalogue of his collection, *Dafeng Tang shuhua lu* (Record of Paintings and Calligraphies in the Dafeng Tang), and had his students, sons, and nephews record the measurements, inscriptions, and colophons of each work. One hundred ninety-four items were included. But an exhibition of Chang's collection of ancient paintings and calligraphies sponsored by the Chengdu City Council on March 15, 1944, included several works not in Chang's catalogue.

The four-volume publication from 1955-56, *Dafeng Tang mingji*, is an illustrated catalogue that includes paintings Chang took with him when he left China in 1949 and works

he had bought since then. The second volume is devoted entirely to the paintings and calligraphy of Shitao and expresses the depth of Chang's admiration for this artist. There are ten hanging scrolls, five handscrolls, and forty-two album leaves from five albums reproduced in this volume. These fifty-seven items were not all the works by Shitao that Chang owned; current research now suggests he may have had close to one hundred.

The third volume of *Dafeng Tang mingji* reproduces works by Zhu Da, including seven hanging scrolls, three handscrolls (one of which is eight album leaves mounted as a handscroll), and fifty album leaves from five albums. Again this is only a portion of Chang's lifetime collection of Zhu Da.

The fourth volume of *Dafeng Tang mingji* illustrates forty works from the Tang dynasty and Five Dynasties period up to the Qing dynasty. Ironically, when *Dafeng Tang mingji* was published, Chang had already sold some of the paintings to museums and private collectors such as the late John M. Crawford. Crawford formed the basis of his important collection, which he bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, with works Chang had collected. Crawford also unwittingly bought some of Chang's forgeries, such as *Through Ancient Eyes*, Signed as Shitao (entry 1) and *Wenshu Plateau in the Yellow Mountains*, Signed as Mei Qing (entry 6). However, Chang never reproduced his forgeries in *Dafeng Tang mingji*.

When Chang Dai-chien was living in Brazil, he listed two hundred ancient paintings in an unillustrated catalogue; some titles repeated paintings in his earlier catalogues, but there were many new entries. In 1983, Chang Dai-chien's will announced the presentation of his private collection to the National Palace Museum, Taipei. This bequest included seventy-five paintings attributed to various Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasty masters. The most important was the Dong



Fig. 18. Attributed to Gu Hongzhong, detail, *The Night Revels of Han Xizai*. Handscroll; ink and color on silk; Palace Museum, Peking. From *Dafeng Tang mingji*, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Benrido Co., 1955–56), pl. 5.

Yuan attribution, *Along the Riverbank at Dusk* (see fig. 95). Many paintings in this generous gift are minor, including Japanese copies of ancient Chinese paintings that Chang purchased in Japan and some of Chang Dai-chien's own forgeries (see App. 2).

Chang Dai-chien's versatility as a painter was enhanced by his passion as a collector and connoisseur, and he considered himself the best judge of painting in five hundred years. Obviously his attitude toward ancient art was different from that of many of his contemporaries, who believed that ancient art was undesirable baggage and never entertained the notion of collecting it. Chang, however, passionately absorbed the art of the past. By surrounding himself with ancient masterpieces, he deepened his appreciation and connoisseurship of painting and reinforced his technical training. His phenomenal Dafeng Tang collection was like a laboratory in which he could study the development of various styles and observe the spiral pattern of history, where style after style built one upon another and each innovation called for a new synthesis.

Photography

Chang Dai-chien's belief that a painter should train by copying ancient models did not limit his willingness to adopt new methods and devices. He was one of the first artists to use a camera, a gadget that was still new in China at the beginning of the 1930s.

Lang Jingshan, whose work was acclaimed in China's first photography exhibition, became a close friend of Chang Dai-

chien and Shanzi; when they were living in Suzhou during the early 1930s, Lang was a frequent guest. There is no evidence that Lang Jingshan taught Chang Dai-chien the art of photography, but they enthusiastically discussed art and aesthetics so it seems likely that Lang encouraged Chang. Conversely, after their friendship was established, Lang's photography became more painterly; sometimes Lang made photomontages, superimposing a scene from one photograph onto another.

Chang Dai-chien's first known photographs date to 1931 from his second trip to the Yellow Mountains. Chang and Shanzi took a hand-held camera and a tripod model and shot more than three hundred pictures. The film was developed by the well-known professional, Zou Jingsheng, who said that not a single frame was wasted or poorly composed. He declared that Chang Dai-chien had the potential to become a professional photographer.²³

That same year Chang and Shanzi published twelve of their best photographs from this trip as a folio set called *Huangshan huaying* (Photo Impressions of the Yellow Mountains). One of the landscapes that Chang photographed served as the prototype for the mounted fan *In the Style of Hongren* (entry 8) and provides evidence for dating the work to 1931–32. An inscription along the border of each print includes a title and sometimes the date. Chang also submitted one of his photographs to the World Expo in Belgium, where he took the gold prize. The subject was the marvelous "cloud-sea" in the Yellow Mountains; Chang demonstrated an exceptional command of the interpretive qualities of black-and-white photography—the contrast of highlights and shadows, shapes, textures, and patterns.

Chang produced a second photo folio in the 1930s of Mount Hua, but later in the decade, on a trip to Mount Emei with Huang Junbi, Chang's interest in taking photographs began to wane. He did not bring a camera with him, but he advised Huang on the best views to photograph.²⁴ As Chang's fame increased during the next decade, professional photographers and photojournalists began to accompany him on his trips, and he relied on their photographs to serve as a record. Chang used his time to confront the landscapes directly and make sketches.

Chang's instant success in creating dramatic tonal intensities in black-and-white photography is directly related to his skill in painting with ink. He believed that photography was a valuable tool for a painter and examined what it could provide that painting could not. At the same time, Chang maintained that painting had an ineffable quality which more closely captured the spirit of the subject than photography.

It is fundamental when you paint an object not to seek too close a correspondence, but at the same time you must not deliberately try to avoid resemblance. In the achievement of mimesis, painting naturally does not equal photography, but if you try to make something unrecognizable, why bother to paint it at all? Somewhere along the continuum from accurate resemblance to fictional representation, [the painter] can capture the spirit and transcribe the spark of heaven.²⁵

Examining early twentieth-century photographs, Chang recalled the centuries-old adage of Chinese painters that "distant water has no waves, distant mountains have no texture, and distant people have no eyes," and he recognized that this saying was borne out by the camera. When camera technology advanced, Chang was thrilled by the zoom lens, which provided him with a fresh interpretation of Shitao's paintings.

Shitao had a unique method of sometimes reversing things and he would paint the foreground in a blurred, amorphous manner almost as if it were a void; but he would paint the midlevel and background clearly and realistically. . . . This is like a zoom lens on a camera; if [the camera lens] focuses on the distance, [then what is far away] becomes clear and the foreground naturally will become blurred.²⁶

Until the end of his career, Chang Dai-chien continued to turn to the compositional and lighting solutions of photography as inspiration for his painting. Many of his landscapes are cropped top and bottom—a view he may have first seen through the lens of a camera. His ability to integrate concepts from photography into Chinese paintings is an example of the paradox of his career as a modern traditionalist.

Painting from Life

Chang Zhengheng was about seven years older than her brother Dai-chien, and she tutored him in scholastics and flower painting, her specialty. One of Chang Dai-chien's clearest memories was being handed a bunch of flowers by his sister, who insisted that he examine their structure petal by petal so that he could understand each part of the flower. This training in *xiesheng*, or painting from life, stayed with him throughout his life, and he often stopped and examined the physical attributes of his subject before he painted it. Conversely, he sometimes painted in sweeping brush strokes whose rhythm suggested (rather than accurately drafted) the structure of the flower or fish that was his subject. In the early 1930s Qi Baishi once pointed out Chang's errors in painting more than six joints in a shrimp's exoskeleton and, in Chang's painting of a cicada on a willow branch, in depicting the cicada in an unlikely pose.²⁷ From this time on, Chang made a concerted effort to follow nature in painting flowers, insects, and animals, although he also maintained that anatomy could be rendered in an impressionistic way.

In the late 1940s one of Chang Dai-chien's students recorded how he painted a flower new to him.

[First Chang] took the flower and dissected it, pulling apart the petals, calyx, and stamens, which he placed on the painting table so that he could study them until he thoroughly apprehended the flower's structure. Then he looked at how the flower was positioned on the branch and from what angles it looked best, before lowering his brush to paint it. When Chang painted a subject directly from nature he not only considered the details of the flower and its leaves, but also the stem, branch, or trunk.²⁸

Instructing his students in flower painting, Chang Dai-chien explained:

For each type of flower that you choose to paint, you must learn to convey each stage of development—from a sprout first coming up, to the advent of small buds, to when the leaves burst forth and the flower appears. You must present in their entirety the nuances of each flower's individual beauty and demeanor and the manner of its growth.²⁹

Chang's emphasis on studying real flowers and painting from life was not for the purpose of replication (fig. 19). Instead he sought an empathy between artist and subject. He believed the painter must know a flower so well that he could fathom every aspect of its potential growth. When the artist's brush traced a stem on paper, the action must accord with the growth of the plant.

Xiesheng is also apparent in Chang Dai-chien's animal

paintings; this concern stemmed from the childhood instruction he received from his older brother Chang Shanzi. Most of the subjects in Dai-chien's repertoire are animals that he raised at one time or another: cats, dogs, monkeys, horses, cattle, birds, and gibbons.

The scenery Chang Dai-chien absorbed on his many mountain hikes also provided him with notes for later paintings. Li Fu, who had spent time with Chang both at Dunhuang and Chengdu, observed: "No matter where [Chang] went he always carried a small loose-leaf sketchbook with him, and as soon as he saw a striking mountain, forest, or any kind of majestic scenery, he instantly sketched the image while it was before him."³⁰ Chang used pencils for most of his sketches, but occasionally he used a brush. Ye Qianyu in Peking has a collection of handscrolls that Chang based on his sketches of actual scenery. The topics include fantastical tree roots in front of a Japanese temple, a view of Mount Hua (fig. 20), and a panorama of Yihe Yuan, where Chang lived when he was in Peking during the 1930s.

The Grand Synthesis

Most art historians have emphasized the importance of the seventeenth-century individualist painters—Shitao, Mei Qing, and Zhu Da—on Chang Dai-chien's development as an artist, and Chang himself acknowledged the influence. Without doubt their spirit and independent mannerisms encouraged Chang's self-expression. But Shitao's defiant statement that he used only his own method, or no method at all, was antithetical to Chang Dai-chien.

From the mid-1930s, as Chang's collection of ancient art grew, he began to formulate a plan to systematically study all the great masters and to reconcile and combine their strengths into a grand synthesis to bring painting to a new brilliance. Such ambition was not new; Dong Qichang had contended that "the painter who imitates ancient masters already belongs to the Upper Vehicle [a term borrowed from Buddhism to indicate the correct path],"³¹ and he argued that using antique styles to paint a landscape imbued it with a spirit of harmony and beauty. In actuality, some of Dong's own paintings seem to reject both nature and the ancients in favor of a new style, in which he painted landscapes with formal, geometric patterns. Nonetheless, his theory held generations of painters spellbound, and it was Dong's theory more than his work that captivated Chang Dai-chien and drove him to strive for his own synthesis of ancient styles and nature.

Chang's inscriptions on paintings such as *Light Snow at Tongguan* (entry 29) reflect his appreciation of Dong



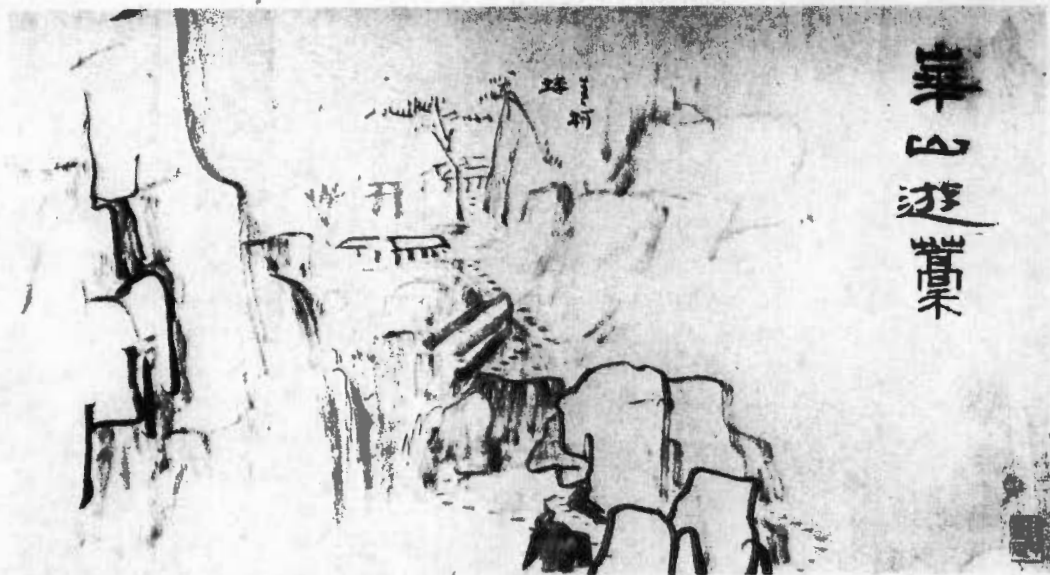
Fig. 19. Chang Dai-chien, detail, *Pear Blossoms*, 1951. Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper; collection of Chang Hsu Wen-po, Taipei.

Qichang, and Chang's appraisals of paintings sometimes include language and syntax closely modeled on the master. Chang learned to imitate Dong's painting and calligraphy, and when forging an ancient painting, he could easily add a spurious connoisseur's pronouncement from "Dong." One of Chang's most memorable copies of Dong Qichang is *Copy of Nesting Clouds, after Dong Qichang* (fig. 21).

Chang Dai-chien read Dong Qichang's treatise on painting, the *Huashuo*, with careful attention. Certain passages seemed especially important to Chang.

To execute level distance, follow Zhao Danian [Zhao Lingrang; act. 1070–1100]; for layered mountains and rising peaks, emulate Jiang Guandao [Jiang Shen; ca. 1090–1138]; for texture strokes, use the hemp-fiber strokes of Dong Yuan or the dotting strokes and texture he employed in *The Xiao and Xiang Rivers*. For trees, use the methods of Bei Yuan [Dong Yuan] and Ziang [Zhao Mengfu; 1254–1322]. For rocks follow the method of Senior General Li's [Li Sixun; 651–716] *Waiting for the Ferry by an Autumn River*, and for a snow scene follow Guo Zhongshu [ca. 910–977]. Li Cheng's [919–967] methods include two kinds of painting—monochrome renderings and the heavily colored blue-and-green style, both of which deserve emulation. If one is able to gather all of the above and form a synthesis with one's own creative powers, and practice like this for four or five years, then certainly Wen [Zhengming; 1470–

Fig. 20. Chang Dai-chien, detail, *Sketches of Mount Hua*, 1935. Handscroll; ink on paper; collection of Ye Qianyu, Peking.



1559] and Shen [Zhou; 1427–1509] will not continue to stand alone in our region of Wu.³²

Dong Qichang seldom copied the past directly, but he selectively lifted the best passages from past works to express his inner vision. His view that nothing could be started anew and that all artistic invention is framed by ancient methods appealed to Chang Dai-chien. As James Cahill has explained, “Taking some old style instead of nature as a referent was no more inhibiting and gave just as much latitude for creative transformation of the received image.”³³ Dong Qichang was able to transform the individual visions of the great masters into a personal style that acknowledged the formal characteristics of abstract shapes and spatial relationships. Chang Dai-chien followed the same process, but the grand synthesis he achieved in his painting looks nothing like Dong Qichang’s. Ultimately, Chang’s grand synthesis culminated in his semiabstract splashed-ink-and-color landscapes.

Xiao Jianchu recorded some of the instruction that Chang Dai-chien gave him when he was a student.

To study tradition is the single most important thing. The history of traditions in Chinese painting is truly lengthy. Some major works have come down from the great masters of the past epochs and dynasties, and no matter during what period or stage of social development an artist lived, every artist exerted his vitality trying to accumulate a multitude of experiences. We should try to master all of these rich experiences ourselves and apply them directly to our art; thus we can develop from each study we make [of the past]. Gradually you will build an individual style, which is a lifetime business and, if undertaken without a willingness to accept the bitter struggles that will ensue, cannot succeed.³⁴

While stressing attention to the past, Chang also instructed his students, “When you study the ancients, you must be able to select their virtues and cast off their weaknesses.”³⁵

Chang Dai-chien accepted ideas from Dong Qichang about which painters to emulate. But he also criticized Dong Qichang’s dismissal of the Song dynasty painters Ma Yuan and Xia Gui. Chang formulated his own lineage of “correct” painters, updating the list and filling the lacunae left by Dong Qichang. Chang included more landscape painters and expanded his list to include religious and professional schools of painting.

The broad range of models that Chang Dai-chien used for his synthesis is suggested by a set of twelve hanging scrolls that Chang did for Fan Zhuzhai of Tianjin in March 1938. He painted this “wall screen” in exchange for some antique paintings from Fan’s collection, and it was one of his first major works to move beyond Ming and Qing dynasty models. Chang emulated four artists each from the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties. For the Tang dynasty he copied Yan Liben, Wang Wei, Yang Sheng, and Li Zhaodao; for the Song, he chose Fan Kuan, Mi Youren, Shen Zifan, who wove pictorial tapestries in the *kesi* technique, and an amalgamation of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui. For the Yuan, Chang followed Zhao Mengfu, Sheng Mou, Ni Zan, and Wang Meng.

The Qing dynasty artist Wang Hui had also echoed Dong Qichang’s sentiments but had never completed his own grand synthesis. Chang believed his ambition, energy, and talent were superior to Wang Hui’s. Moreover, with modern printing and photographic reproductions, Chang had more oppor-



Fig. 21. Chang Dai-chien, *Copy of Nesting Clouds*, after Dong Qichang. Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper; Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang.

tunities than Wang had to see ancient art. Wang Hui limited himself to the landscapes of Dong Qichang's orthodoxy while Chang embraced every genre and used models Dong had not recommended. Chang faulted Wang Hui for his "anemic color scheme" and "paltry spirit." Thus Chang virtually ignored Wang Hui and the other orthodox masters of the Qing dynasty who are collectively known as the Four Wangs. For the same reason, Chang also ignored the popular school of

Wen Zhengming's followers, who were most active during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Chang believed that painting had become thin and saccharine after the Ming dynasty, with many artists lacking audacious spirit.³⁶

Even before Dong Qichang had articulated his famous theory of synthesis, the concept had a long history. Zhao Mengfu had developed a painting style that incorporated past models with highly expressive personal brushwork, which Chang Dai-chien admired. Zhao Mengfu, Dong Qichang, and Wang Hui had each lived in a tumultuous age when social and political structures were in rapid flux and the economy was unstable. As the status quo crumbled and new rulers took over, collections of art shifted hands, increasing the opportunities for artists to see ancient masterpieces. Similarly, Chang lived in a time of great change, and he aggressively sought opportunities to study a wide range of ancient art. Few of his contemporaries shared this passion and ambition, perhaps because they were looking mainly to the West for inspiration.

It seems unlikely that any artist will attempt such a grand synthesis in the future. When Chang Dai-chien was creating copies of works such as the Dunhuang murals, these images were new to his public. Although the works of famous Song and Yuan dynasty artists were better known than the wall murals, nonetheless Chang often copied paintings that had previously only been known by a very small group of collectors and connoisseurs. Thus Chang's copies—both his close copies and his freely interpretive ones—caused great excitement among his patrons. Chang rediscovered the past in order to preserve it. Now that museums and art publications have made ancient art readily accessible, everyone has an opportunity to directly study past art. It is no longer necessary for artists to copy the past so that a new generation may appreciate famous works; likewise, the past is too familiar to the general public to be considered fresh subject matter. Chang Dai-chien's deeply held belief that the past is the most important springboard for personal creativity is no longer apt to find adherents; the familiarity of past art has actually made artists and the public more indifferent to it. Chang Dai-chien lived during the period before reproductions of great works and the works themselves were widely circulated—the combination of his abilities, training, ambition, and timing resulted in a singular integration of tradition and innovation that is not likely to reoccur.

Notes

1. Gao Lingmei, ed., *Chang Dai-chien hua: Chinese Painting, with the Original Paintings and Discourses on Chinese Art by Chang Dai-chien* (Hong Kong: Dongfang yishu gongsi, 1961), and *Chang Dai-chien hua ji* (Hong Kong: The East Society, 1967). Two other sources for Chang Dai-chien's art theories are: Xue Huishan, "Chang Dai-chien huayu lu," in *Chang Dai-chien jinian wenji*, ed. Ba Dong and Huang Chunxiu (Taipei: Guoli lishi bowuguan, 1988), 1-5; and Feng Youheng, *Xingxiang zhi wai: Chang Dai-chien de shenghuo yu yishu* (Taipei: Jiuge chubanshe, 1983).
2. Chang Dai-chien, "Dai-chien jushi huashuo," in Gao Lingmei, *Chang Dai-chien hua ji*, n.p. The translations are by Jan Stuart based on Gao Lingmei's; in a few cases Gao's translations are quoted directly.
3. Quoted in Xie Jiaxiao, *Chang Dai-chien de shijie* (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuhan gongsi, 1982), 241.
4. *Ibid.*, 239.
5. Chen Congzhou, "Bo da jing shen," in Bao Limin, ed., *Chang Dai-chien de yishu* (Peking: Sanlian shudian, 1986), 47.
6. Kang-i Sun Chang, "Chinese 'Lyric Criticism' in the Six Dynasties," in Susan Bush and Christian Murck, eds., *Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 216.
7. Quoted in Feng Youheng, *Xingxiang zhi wai*, 142.
8. Quoted in Xie Jiaxiao, *Chang Dai-chien de shijie*, 235-36.
9. *Ibid.*, 237.
10. Quoted in Bao Limin and Wang Zhen, "Chang Dai-chien nianpu," *Duo-yun* 19 (1988): 102.
11. "Criminal sibling" is the term coined by Anthony Grafton; see his *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990).
12. Ma Zonghuo, comp., *Shulin jishi*; reprinted in Yang Jialuo, comp., *Yishu congbian*, vol. 6 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1962), 2:26b.
13. Mi Fu, *Shu shi*; reprinted in *ibid.*, vol. 2, 56.
14. Ma Zonghuo, comp., *Shulin jishi*; reprinted in *ibid.*, vol. 6, 2:57b.
15. *Ibid.*, 2:58b-59a.
16. The translation is based on Hongnam Kim's excellent study "Zhou Liang-gong and His 'Duhua lu' (Lives of Painters): Patron, Critics, and Painters in Seventeenth Century China" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1985), 90. The original quotation is from Zhou Lianggong, *Duhua lu*; reprinted in Yang Jialuo, *Yishu congbian*, vol. 14, 2:20.
17. Quoted in Xie Jiaxiao, *Chang Dai-chien de shijie*, 83.
18. Wai-kam Ho, "Late Ming Literati: Their Social and Cultural Ambience," in Chu-ting Li and James C. Y. Watt, eds., *The Chinese Scholar's Studio* (New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1987), 31.
19. Draft of a private letter to the journalist and collector Yang Rude; transcribed by author.
20. Translation by Jan Stuart; Chinese text and another translation are in Chang Dai-chien, ed., *Dafeng Tang mingji*, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Benrido Co., 1955), n.p.
21. See Wen Fong, Alfreda Murck, Shou-chien Shih, Pao-chen Chen, and Jan Stuart, *Images of the Mind: The Calligraphy and Painting Collection of the Edward L. Elliott Family and John B. Elliott at Princeton University* (Princeton, N.J.: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1984), 290, pl. 10.
22. Translation by Jan Stuart; Chinese text and another translation are in Chang Dai-chien, *Dafeng Tang mingji*, vol. 1, n.p.
23. Min San, "Chang Dai-chien zai Jiashan wangshi shiling," in *Chang Dai-chien shengping he yishu* (Peking: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1988), 229.
24. Huang Junhi, "Chang Dai-chien shi feichang ren," in *Chang Dai-chien xiansheng jinian ce* (Taipei: Guoli gugong howuyuan, 1983), 292.
25. Quoted in Xie Jiaxiao, *Chang Dai-chien de shijie*, 239.
26. *Ibid.*, 241.
27. Feng Youheng, *Xingxiang zhi wai*, 121-22.
28. Yu Zhizhen, "Chang Dai-chien laoshi de huaniao hua yishu," in Bao Limin, *Chang Dai-chien de yishu*, 65.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Quoted in Li Yongqiao, "Xin'an qingyuan shou tuxing," *Dacheng* 149 (1986): 10-11.
31. Dong Qichang, *Hua Chan Shi suibi*, reprinted in Yang Jialuo, *Yishu congbian*, vol. 28, 37.
32. The *Huashuo* is often misattributed to Mo Shilong (ca. 1538-1587) instead of Dong Qichang. The Chinese text is reprinted in Yang Jialuo, *Yishu congbian*, vol. 12, 309-10.
33. James Cahill, *The Compelling Image* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 57.
34. Xiao Jianchu, "Zhigen chuantong buduan chuangxin," in Bao Limin, *Chang Dai-chien de yishu*, 52.
35. *Ibid.*
36. See Chang Dai-chien's inscription on his 1947 painting *River Crossing on an Autumn Evening*; Christie's auction catalogue, Hong Kong, January 1989, 117, lot 140.